



ACT Government

2004-2005 BUDGET

MEDIA RELEASE

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY A BIG WINNER FROM 2004-2005 ACT BUDGET

The 2004-05 Budget ensures Canberra's multicultural community will soon have a place they can call 'home', Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said today.

The Chief Minister said the Budget contains a \$2.6 million funding commitment for the creation of an ACT Multicultural Centre.

The ACT Multicultural Centre, the establishment of which was announced in the recently released *Social Plan*, will be located in the heart of Civic in the North Building on London Circuit.

"In keeping with the key theme of *The Canberra Plan* to create a 'dynamic heart' in Civic, the new multicultural centre will bring further life and vibrancy into a part of the city which already houses the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the Playhouse and the Canberra Theatre.

"Being close to public transport, community organisations and ACT Government agencies, the North Building is the ideal location for a multicultural centre.

"All Canberrans will have the opportunity to broaden their cultural experiences and understanding through a range of programs that will be undertaken at the Centre."

Mr Stanhope said the decision and funding for a multicultural centre demonstrated the ACT Government's ongoing commitment to Canberra's multicultural community.

Mr Stanhope said he anticipated the new centre would house a number of peak organisations such as the ACT Multicultural Council, the Migrant Resource Centre of Canberra and Queanbeyan and the ACT Ethnic Schools Association. It would also provide space for emerging community groups.

The centre is expected to open in the first half of 2005, following the relocation of ACT Health and the completion of necessary refurbishments.

The ACT Budget also provides ongoing support for the popular National Multicultural Festival to the tune of \$310,000.

"This festival continues to grow in stature, attracting record numbers of 120,000 for the 2004 event," Mr Stanhope said.



“The event is now gaining a following not only in Canberra and across Australia but in many overseas countries.

“Through *The Canberra Plan* my Government is committed to supporting popular community events – and they don’t get much bigger or better than the National Multicultural Festival.”

Mr Stanhope said he looked forward, in the months ahead, to putting in place a new Anti-Racism Strategy for Canberra.

“Essentially this will be an action plan to combat racism in a range of places, including the workplace, schools and the broader community.

“Sadly, despite the incredible diversity and multicultural history of this city, racism remains a problem which requires our attention.

“My Government remains committed to stamping out racism and as I pointed out recently at the time of launching the *Social Plan*, a 21st century Canberra must demonstrate a commitment to respect, diversity and human rights.”

The Chief Minister said he looked forward to strengthening the ACT Government’s ties with Australia’s diplomatic community in June when he hosts a meeting for the heads of diplomatic missions.

“The current troubles on the international stage demonstrate, now more than ever, the need for people from all over the world to maintain dialogue, share our ideas and to work collectively for world peace.”

Statement Ends